

HOUSE
RESEARCH

ORGANIZATION bill analysis

SB 895

Harris, et al. (Cain)

5/25/89 (CSSB 895 by B. Hunter)

SUBJECT: Expanding UT-Dallas to a four-year institution

COMMITTEE: Higher Education: committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes--Delco, Rangel, D. Hudson, B. Hunter, T. Hunter,
0 nays
4 absent--Watkins, McDonald, Price, Uher

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 15 -- 19-10 (Brooks, Caperton,
Carriker, Glasgow, Haley, Henderson, McFarland,
Ratliff, Sims, Washington)

WITNESSES: (on companion bill, HB 1776):

For--Peter O'Donnell, Jr., Committee to Strengthen
Higher Education; Louis Beecherl, chairman, University
of Texas Board of Regents; William McKenzie, chairman,
Texas A&M Board of Regents; Jess Hay, Texas Higher
Education Foundation; Fred Bussey, chairman, Texas Tech
University Board of Regents; Hans Mark, chancellor,
University of Texas System

Against--Stanton Calvert, Raymond Hawkins, Texas Public
Community/Junior College Association; Larry Shirts,
Charles Burnside, Texas Junior College Teachers
Association; Ted Willis, Arlington Chamber of Commerce;
Charles Carpenter, Denton Chamber of Commerce; Terrence
Ryan, Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Jim Williams,
president, Grayson County College; three others

BACKGROUND: The University of Texas at Dallas is an upper-level
institution offering courses at the junior, senior, and
graduate levels. The university began as a privately
funded research center and was transferred to the state
and the University of Texas System in 1969. Current
enrollment is approximately 7,700 students.

DIGEST: CSSB 895 would authorize the admission of freshman and
sophomores at the University of Texas at Dallas. The
university could begin admitting freshmen and
sophomores for the 1990 summer term. Enrollment of
lower-division students would be restricted to 1,040
for each term through the spring 1992 semester.
Thereafter, enrollment would be limited to 2,000
freshmen and a total of 5,000 lower division students.

The school would be allowed to admit additional undergraduate students up to 4 percent above the targeted number if the students were sophomores transferring from a community college in the Dallas or Collin County Community College District.

At least 5 percent of the targeted enrollment would be reserved for minority students, until the minority student population was fully representative of the state's minority populations.

Undergraduate admission policies would emphasize the selection of students interested in pursuing natural science, mathematics or engineering degrees, although other senior higher education institutions in the North Texas area would not be precluded from creating or developing undergraduate or graduate programs in these areas. School policy would designate the institution's primary mission as serving students who have received instruction at community colleges in the surrounding area. Admission standards would be at least as strict as standards applied at the University of Texas at Austin

The bill states the Legislature's intent that spending of general revenue on implementing the expansion be limited to \$500,000 for each year of the next biennium. In the appropriation formulas prepared by the Higher Education Coordinating Board for fiscal 1992-93, UT-Dallas would still be entitled to incremental funding for junior and senior enrollments provided to those institutions that enroll undergraduates only at those levels.

The bill would take effect Sept. 1, 1989, with the provisions for freshman and sophomore enrollment taking effect May 16, 1990.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

Creating a four-year institution that emphasizes science and engineering would be both a financial and educational boost for the state, and the University of Texas at Dallas would be the perfect place for such a school. The institution was created as a research center and already has the basic structure to become a strong four-year university. UT-Dallas has a history of solid financial support from the private sector and would not require any substantial increase in state funds, as indicated by the fiscal note. The expanded,

four-year university would provide a foundation for the state to compete with Boston and California's Silicon Valley, building on the Dallas area's third-place national ranking as a high-tech center.

UT Dallas would not compete with other institutions in the area or around the state. The enrollment limitations, the admission standards and continued coordination with nearby institutions would minimize the effect the limited expansion would have on local community college enrollment. A recent Florida study has documented that such expansions have a minimal effect on related institutions. In fact, the Dallas County Community College District board has endorsed the expansion as a way to benefit the citizens and students of the area.

CSSB 895 would make it clear that UT-Dallas is to have high admission standards. Its academic programs would emphasize science, math, and engineering -- fields of study that are underrepresented throughout the state and nation.

The undergraduate expansion of UT-Dallas would also help ease the burden on the University of Texas at Austin undergraduate engineering program and help fulfill the need for 6,000 new engineers in the north-central part of the state by the year 2000. It would not drain funds from UT-Austin or require new expenditures. The expanded school would merely redirect some funds to UT-Dallas to educate those whom the Austin campus cannot handle.

A four-year course of study would establish a standard of excellence by attracting the best students from the beginning of their academic careers. Recruitment has been hampered in the past because students have had to transfer into the program in midstream and face the risk of falling behind because their lower-division program failed to prepare them properly. Lower-division courses at UT Dallas would serve as an underpinning for higher level courses and would also allow graduate students to earn money as teaching assistants and tutors. In the long run the institution would keep some of the best and brightest Texas students from having to pursue their science and engineering degrees at schools in California and Massachusetts. Those students who attend school in Texas are more likely to stay in the state.

The argument that the expansion of upper-level institutions is somehow having a domino effect and must be stopped is unfair. Each proposed expansion should be considered on its individual merits, needs and strengths.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Expanding the University of Texas at Dallas by authorizing admission of lower-division students would be unnecessary from an educational perspective and unwise from a financial one. No objective, comprehensive study has concluded that expanding UT-Dallas is justified.

Student enrollment the Dallas-Fort Worth area shows no sign of outstripping already available facilities. The UT-Dallas undergraduate engineering program that figures so prominently in arguments for this expansion would only duplicate the existing UT-Arlington engineering program -- that institution just completed a new engineering building and has 2,000 vacancies in its engineering school. There is also no indication that UT-Dallas could draw would be UT-Austin and Texas A&M-College Station students. More likely it would only compete with UT-Arlington and eventually starve both campuses.

Creating an 'MIT of the Southwest' would hardly happen overnight, and while UT-Dallas may have private financial resources now, this may not always be the case. Most private support goes for initial construction and property acquisition; relatively little goes to maintenance. After the construction phase is complete, the state pays \$4 per square foot to maintain campus facilities -- the more buildings and property purchased today, the greater the cost to maintain the campus in the future.

Although an expanded school is touted by local boosters as being good for Dallas, what about its effect on the system of higher education statewide? Two years ago the Select Committee on Higher Education considered consolidating some of the state's higher education institutions, and each year the Legislature has difficulty finding funds to meet higher education needs. This year the Legislature finally recognized that expansion of higher education in South Texas was long overdue; now CSSB 895 proposes to spread scarce higher education funds even thinner. A bill to expand

Corpus Christi State University to a four-year institution has already been sent to the governor, and legislation to create a new four-year Central Texas University in Killeen is headed the same way. If UT Dallas is expanded to four years, the UT-Pan American center at Brownsville, the University of Texas-Permian Basin, and other upper-division schools will also demand their chance to expand, with little regard for the overall allocation of state higher education resources.

The experience in Florida shows that the downward expansion of its upper-level institutions hurt enrollment at neighboring two-year institutions and both public and private four-year institutions. The expansions also siphoned off some of the best students from community colleges. Upper-division schools are fed by junior and community colleges, and conversion to a four-year school, even with enrollment limits, would undermine support for the community college concept.

A major research university does not have to be a four-year institution. Some of the major science and engineering research institutions -- such as MIT, Johns Hopkins and Stanford -- achieved their stature on the quality of their graduate programs. In fact, in the fall of 1988, less than one fifth of the graduate students at MIT had received their undergraduate degrees at MIT.

NOTES:

The committee substitute removed provisions in the Senate-passed version of SB 895 that would have made the University of Texas at Brownsville a free-standing, upper-division institution and the upper-division University of Texas at the Permian Basin a four-year institution.